Bethany

BAKHT SINGH

Gospel Literature Service
Bombay

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	THE MASTER'S MOTIVE	1
2	RESURRECTION POWER	13
3	CHRIST THE HEAD	22
4	THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST	33
5	PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST	42
6	THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST	49
7	THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST	59

CHAPTER ONE

THE MASTER'S MOTIVE

IN John 11 we read of a village called Bethany. It is recorded in the Gospels, that the Lord Jesus Christ visited Bethany eight times. As far as we read in the Scriptures, He never once stayed overnight in Jerusalem. He would go there in the morning, heal the sick and perform miracles, and then go to Bethany or the Mount of Olives nearby. The Mount of Olives and Bethany are side by side, and either He would go to the Mount of Olives to pray, or He would go to Bethany (Mark 11:1,11,19). On each occasion, after healing or teaching or performing miracles in Jerusalem, He would return to Bethany or to the Mount of Olives in the evening. Finally it was from Bethany He ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50). All this goes to show that the Lord Jesus had special lessons to teach His disciples in Bethany and it was at Bethany that He gave the last message and command to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." From all these visits to Bethany we too can learn many spiritual lessons.

The word Bethany means *house of figs*. In the Bible figs speak of health, c.f. 2 Kings 20:7. King Hezekiah was nigh unto death, he was so sick. At last Isaiah came to him and told him to take a lump of figs and put it upon the boil, and he recovered. Again in 1 Samuel 30:12 an Egyptian was almost dying without food for three days. His master, the Amalekite, left him in the field because he was sick

(v.13), but David's men fed him with bread, water and figs, and he recovered.

Figs are a part of the normal diet of the Jews. In 1 Samuel 25:18 we read how Abigail, to please David, brought him so many good things to eat. When big feasts are made for guests, the host will prepare for the occasion whatever dishes the guests like best. Similarly Abigail brought the best things to David, hoping to appease his anger, and amongst them were two hundred cakes of figs. On another occasion in 1 Chronicles 12:38-40 men of war came to make David king, and there was great joy in the whole kingdom. There was feasting, and the best things were available for eating and drinking. Some of the people brought a large quantity of these good things on asses, camels, mules and oxen. There was meat, meal, cakes of figs and bunches of raisins, and wine and oil, and oxen and sheep abundantly. Amongst those good things were cakes of figs. This is an illustration of the value of figs among the Jews, for feasting and also for health. Bethany as *house of figs* is also *house of health*.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to bring us true health. All men are sick of sin and the sickness of sin cannot be healed. Other diseases may be healed by medicines or by some other treatment, but this disease of sin cannot be healed. So the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to heal men and women from the sickness of sin.

In Jeremiah 33:6 to 8, we read that because of rebellion and sin, the people of Israel became captives in Babylon for seventy years. Even though they had to be punished, yet because of His love for them, God promised to bring them out from their captivity after seventy years. He said: "I will pardon your sins

and transgression and iniquity", and said also: "**I will give you health and cure**". The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to pardon our sins, transgression and iniquity, and to give us spiritual health. Because our unhappiness and miseries are due to our sins, when our sins are forgiven we become happy and full of joy and spiritual prosperity. Then we have liberty to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ for everything we need.

God promises in Jeremiah 33:3 "**Call unto me, and I will answer thee**, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not". These words were spoken to those who rebelled against God, yet when they turned from their sins, He willingly pardoned them and met their need. Bethany speaks of spiritual health and cure. The Lord Jesus Christ was seeking to show through Bethany how man can receive health spiritually, and true peace. He went to Bethany a number of times, and on each visit, He revealed something more of the secret of how He gives and how we can receive true spiritual health. All diseases are caused by sin and even death itself. In Bethany there is healing, provided you come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first time the Lord came to Bethany is recorded in John 11:1. The Lord had a special love for the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They had many shortcomings, failures and inward weaknesses, but still He loved them. In the same way He loves you and me. Romans 5:8 proclaims His love: "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us". The Lord uses many ways to show His love for us. Even though we have sinned and grieved Him, and wounded Him again and again, He yet receives us and shows His love to us, but unless we are fully prepared to re-

ceive that love, we cannot enjoy the life and joy and health He offers to us.

Now let us see how that divine love can be received and enjoyed by us. Most people only think of divine love in terms of earthly blessings. In fact that is how most people define blessing. If they have everything in plenty they think God loves them. But God has many ways of showing His love to us. Man can be prosperous, but very miserable inside. Earthly prosperity is no sign of divine love, but that very wrong conception exists in many hearts. Men think of health and prosperity as spiritual blessing, but God's blessing is for eternity (Psa.133:3). True blessing is always in terms of eternal life, and whatever we enjoy through eternal life is true blessing. When we have inward peace we enjoy true life, and inspite of whatever God may allow in our lives, whether sufferings or difficulties, because of eternal life we can enjoy true blessing. Blessings come to us in different ways. In fact, in Psalm 119:67,71 we see how David regards affliction and trials as blessing. He is thankful in his affliction because he learns how to keep and understand God's Word (Psa.18: 19,35&36). Through the very same affliction, he comes into enlargement. In the same way in Job 42: 6.12,13, through many painful trials, Job received a double portion of blessing. Whatever God may permit in our lives, even though it may be painful, because we enjoy eternal life it becomes a blessing.

In Genesis 26:12 to 14 we see certain men became jealous of Isaac and wanted him to go away. Isaac would rather lose much, than to have strife with the Philistines (v.16). Then the men of Gerar made it very difficult for Isaac, and they also wanted him to remove himself from that place. Isaac's men had

dug the wells and again the Philistines had claimed them– but again Isaac moved away. Each time the Lord gave him a better place. All these trials were a blessing to him and in the end he came to Rehoboth, a large place (vs.22,24). There are many, many trials which are hidden blessings, and we have to come into God's full purpose to know His heavenly plans and real blessing.

To show His love to Martha and Mary, the Lord Jesus Christ came to Bethany again and again, but they had to be prepared to receive His love in fulness. The first time He came to show them their true condition. If we really want to receive God's love fully, we have first to see our sinful and corrupt condition. There is nothing good in us, as Paul testifies (Rom.7:18). It takes us many years to learn that lesson, because we do not want to think that there is nothing good in us. It is only after many failures that we see how sinful and corrupt we are, and that we have to be delivered from our sinful nature.

Sometime ago somebody gave me a rosy apple. I kept it for two days, and then I cut it and found it rotten inside. I tried to find at least one good piece, but there was not a single piece that was good. It looked very nice outside but was rotten inside. I kept on scraping at it with a knife, but there was nothing good in it at all. That is like ourselves. Outwardly we look good but inwardly we are rotten. That is our nature. God has declared that in our flesh there is no good, and therefore our life is defiled, full of shortcomings and failures. God's servant testified: "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing". We are defiled in every way, and cannot depend upon our old nature for anything. It takes many

years to learn that lesson, but we *have* to learn that lesson, for it is only then that divine love can flow freely.

Outwardly the family at Bethany were very nice people. They looked after the Lord Jesus and loved Him. They were not like the Pharisees and Sadducees who found fault with Him. This family had great respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, and welcomed Him with great joy every time He went in that direction. He must have passed that way many times, because Bethany is on the way to Jericho from Jerusalem, and whenever the Lord Jesus came from Jerusalem, He must have stopped there on the way. Even though His visits are recorded only eight times, He must have gone there many more times than that. The Lord knew very well their condition and it was not because they were perfect that He went there. He knew how much He could accomplish in them by going there so He kept on going. The first time He went, it was to show them their true nature and condition, for He only can see our hearts.

Samuel was God's prophet and a man of experience, (1 Sam.16:7). After many years of serving as God's prophet, he was sent by God to Bethlehem. God had told him: "I have refused Saul and I want somebody else to be anointed king." God did not reveal to Samuel beforehand that David was going to be king instead of Saul. When Samuel came to Jesse's house, Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, was brought before him. He had a good appearance, a strong body and he would have been fit to be king, judging by his height, features, and bearing. Everything was perfect about him. Samuel thoroughly examined him and seeing his stature, bearing and height, he said within himself: "Eliab is certainly fit to be king.

He must be God's choice". But God told him clearly: "Do not be deceived by his face. I have refused him".

That is how men are often deceived. However good we look, that will not satisfy God. Man may think highly of us, because we speak nicely and politely and look humble. No doubt Martha and Mary belonged to a nice family. When the Lord Jesus came to the house, straightaway Martha would begin to cook food, and straightaway Mary would come to the feet of the Lord Jesus. What a nice family they were, very generous, kind, loving and so hospitable, and above all a God-fearing family. But the Lord had seen something which others could not see. Unless a man becomes totally new, he cannot receive God's love, power and grace. Even though outwardly he may look nice and well-behaved, none of these human virtues can satisfy God, unless they come from an inward change of nature. We remain under condemnation as long as we do not come to the Lord Jesus. Whatever we have through our old nature, our good behaviour and manners or that which we call virtue, is nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It is only as we receive new life that our nature becomes new, and through these virtues we become God-fearing.

So the Lord Jesus Christ came to Bethany to let them see first their true inward condition, for only then could He bless them. Patiently and lovingly He came to Bethany, till He found a change in the whole family. The Lord Jesus Christ very lovingly comes to us also again and again till all things are new, for everything must come from Him. 2 Corinthians 5:18 (1st part) "All things are of God." (v.17) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature." All that we are, all that we do, or possess, or acquire, must be from God. Only then He is satisfied, and to this end He comes to us, and sends His people to us and His servants again and again till we are brought into full possession of new life. Then our yea becomes yea and our nay becomes nay, and every step will be controlled by Him. That takes time, but the Lord knows all our difficulties and very lovingly comes to us again and again.

In the beginning we find there is no mention about Lazarus. Evidently he was not interested at first. He was a good man. There was no charge against him, for he was honest and hardworking, and a good brother. We know that, because Martha and Mary wept so much for him when he died. If he was a bad man, nobody would have wept for him. There are some very nice people who are very kind and very loving. They love to talk to God's servants and to receive them into their homes, but if the latter gives them the Word of God, they may go to sleep. They have no interest. Someone can talk about a dog, or a donkey, or a monkey, and they will be interested, but for God's Word they have no interest. Lazarus may have been thus in the beginning. He may have had no interest. Perhaps he did not like God's Word. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the house, he may cleverly have gone somewhere else. If the Lord Jesus came in by the front door, he may have gone out by the back door. There are very many men of that type. You cannot find any fault with them, for they are good, nice, hard-working people, but somehow they do not have any hunger or thirst for the things of God.

In Luke 10:40 we see how kind Martha was. As soon as she saw the Lord through the window, she

got busy getting the fire ready and began to prepare the food. She was very hospitable, kind-hearted, and a very good cook. But she was also full of jealousy and bad temper. She went on cooking for some time, but kept one eye upon Mary and one eye upon the food. She waited for a while, but her heart was burning, till, looking very angry, she went to the Lord Jesus, and said "Lord, look at that woman! Tell her to come and help me". By the Lord coming into her family, all her hidden weaknesses came out.

Many a husband will say that his wife is extremely good, and that she is very loving and kind, and there is nobody like her in the world. She is very hospitable too. Her only fault is that when she gets angry, nobody can move her, and she will even say to her husband. "Why do you look at me that way, or this way?" In many people there is jealousy and bad temper, and the family is unhappy. With all their good virtues, there are hidden weaknesses in each one. The Lord Jesus knew fully well the condition of this family, and knew also that unless those weaknesses were uncovered there could not be a change.

Whenever the Lord uncovers sin, He does it to bless us, but human beings uncover sin to shame us. He went to Bethany not to shame them, but to allow them to see their own condition, to realize their own folly and weakness, and how they could be transformed and become new.

In the same way Mary was outwardly humble. Straightway she came to the feet of the Lord Jesus when He came into the house. She was so hungry for the Word of God, but judging by her attitude in John 11 20 she was too proud. It was true that the Lord Jesus had not come to them when they wanted Him, yet He was worthy of respect. Even though

Martha was in sorrow, when she heard the Lord had come, she straightway left the house and went to receive Him She knew she must welcome Him properly, and to show her respect went to meet Him, but Mary sat still weeping and saying: "I won't go! I won't go! Why did He not come when we called Him? We loved Him and served Him! I won't go!" She was too proud, so refused to go and give Him honour. Many of us are like that. We are proud of family, nationality, wealth, land or property, proud of beauty, complexion nose, face, hair, or some other feature Whatever it may be, many of us think we have something to be proud of. The Lord went to Bethany in order first to let that family realize their true inward condition Before God can bless us and help us, He must show us also our true nature.

Good doctors must examine a patient thoroughly before treatment. Those who want money look at the tongue and send the patient away But good doctors will do many tests They examine the lungs, blood and everything else, and tell the patient what is the cause of the sickness. Then they give the right treatment. The Lord Jesus is the only person who can diagnose our inward nature. Unless we humble ourselves and see ourselves as the Lord Jesus sees us, He cannot bless us We must cry out like Job in Job 42:6, and as Peter cried out in Luke 5:8, and allow the Lord Jesus to diagnose our spiritual diseases.

Peter never saw himself inwardly. The Lord Jesus had to come to him again and again till he saw his true condition. The first time the Lord met him is given in John 1:35 to 42. He called him by his name Simon, and then gave him a new name. Peter thought this was a wonderful thing He thought "Here is a man who knows me by name", but there was no in

ward change in him In Luke 4:38,39 we read of the second occasion when the Lord met Peter, and came into his house. There He healed Peter's mother in-law by rebuking the fever, and straightway she got up and served them. Peter doubtless thought to himself: "What a wonderful person this is! By His word alone she has been healed!" But still there was no inward change in Peter

The Lord Jesus met Peter the third time in Luke 4:40,41. This happened in the street where they were living. A crowd came to see the Lord Jesus, and by His word many were healed. Simon Peter was seeing wonderful things happening before his eyes, but yet there was no change in him. He was the same old Peter, but the Lord kept on coming to him again and again In Luke 5 3, the disciples had toiled all night, but had caught nothing Peter sat in the empty boat with an empty stomach. But in the very same boat, the Lord came to show him that though he was a hardworking, honest and God fearing man, yet inwardly his life was barren. He was still not prepared to follow Christ fully. At the Lord's command Peter obeyed and put the net on the right side of the boat, and it began to sink. At last Peter saw his condition He said: "Lord, I am a sinful man, depart from me." He did not say that in the beginning He was no doubt a God-fearing man, waiting for the Messiah, but never saw his condition as a sinner, and the Lord had to come to him again and again before he did so

Our nature is under condemnation unless our "old man" is crucified. Then we receive new life, and only then, we receive true blessing. That was the purpose why our Lord came to Bethany to the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. It was in

order to change them and make them entirely new.

This is a picture of a true Church. In every visit to Bethany He revealed something. He wants to teach us also how His love can come into us fully. Our Lord wants our heart, home and Church to be a Bethany, and then there will be a triumphant life, a happy home and a living Church. This threefold secret is revealed by our Lord going to Bethany.

CHAPTER TWO

RESURRECTION POWER

ACCORDING to the Gospel records the Lord Jesus Christ went to Bethany eight times. By doing so he revealed the threefold secret of a triumphant life, a living Church and a happy home. The first visit of the Lord Jesus Christ to Bethany is described in Luke 10:38-42 The second visit was at the invitation of Martha and Mary The first time He went of His own choice But in John 11 3 the sisters sent for Him to come home, because there was a special need at that time Their brother was very sick. They did not know then what a great blessing the Lord Jesus Christ had in store for them by not coming immediately.

In the beginning of our Christian life, we go to the Lord only when we are sick or in any need. We pray only for our personal needs or problems. In John 11 we find the Lord purposely went late to Bethany.Even though the sisters had sent for Him, He did not go immediately (v.4) because He had in His mind to give a greater blessing than they had asked for. They wanted Him to come and heal their brother who was very sick. This is how we too pray in the beginning.We think only of our personal need. At that time the need of the family was very great and urgent. We find however, that when the Lord delays in answering prayer, it means that He wants to give us a greater blessing. The Lord purposely delays going so that He might show the family and the

people His true glory and give them a personal experience of the power of resurrection.

We can see from God's Word that the power of resurrection is the highest power in the world (Phil. 3 10). To know resurrection power was the longing of Paul the Apostle in his old age. He had seen, not one, but many miracles, through the Lord Jesus Christ. He was caught up to the third heaven and saw there many mysteries. At the beginning of his conversion, he had heard the voice of Christ. And again in Acts 18.9, the Lord appeared to him. He had seen the vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord had spoken to him clearly: "I am with thee, Fear not". Similarly he was caught up to the third heaven. Paul did not ask for another chance to go to the third heaven though that had been a great experience. Also he could have said to the Lord: "Appear to me again". But Paul was not longing for miracles, visions or the third heaven. He was longing for two things, viz., "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection". Even though God had spoken to him so clearly and so many times yet he knew that he had to know Him more intimately and have an inward intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ went to Bethany for the same purpose so that Martha, Mary and Lazarus might know Him more intimately, and so that they might have a personal experience of the power of resurrection. In the beginning no doubt they had some knowledge of Him because they had received Him into their home, and had spoken to Him personally. They knew Him more intimately in that sense, but did not know who He was. In John 11:22 Martha said: "Whatever you ask God He will give it

to you." In verse 24 again she says "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection". When Jesus said that Lazarus would rise again on that very day, she could not believe it, though she believed he would rise at the last day. Even though the Lord Jesus was about to raise Lazarus, Martha came in His way and said, "Lord by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead for four days." The Lord had already told them to roll away the stone, and it should have been easy to believe that Lazarus would come out of the grave; otherwise why had He asked the people to take away the stone? But their faith was merely a mist.

Many say: "I have faith!" but when a real test comes they have no faith. Some talk about faith and some sing about faith, but when the test comes their faith fails. Their minds are full of doubts and fears So what they do is not in real and living faith. The Lord used a painful experience to reveal to Martha and Mary the power of resurrection. The Lord took Paul through many painful trials (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Nobody knows even today what his thorn in the flesh was, but we believe it was something very painful. That is why he besought the Lord thrice to take it away from him. He was not a man to grumble. He never complained to the Lord, nor did he murmur against the trials he went through. A list of the trials which Paul went through is given in 2 Corinthians 11:24 to 28. With all these sufferings he never once complained. He knew how to go through the most painful sufferings. Never once did he say, "Oh Lord don't take me through these sufferings any more." Then came this thorn in the flesh It was so painful that he prayed thrice for the Lord to take it away. He said "I cannot bear it any

longer. This is too painful for me." The Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee". The thorn was for a purpose. First of all to keep him humble, lest he should exalt himself above measure, and secondly to prove the power of resurrection to him. That is why he said in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that, not only was he glad to suffer infirmities, but he even took pleasure in sufferings, reproaches, distresses and trials, thus enjoying the power of resurrection. In Philippians 4:11-13 he said: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me". That testimony was given only after he had passed through all situations. Though he was hungry he rejoiced. God kept him hungry even though He had performed many miracles through him There were times when he had to do without food for some days, and had other needs as well, yet he felt strong in all his trials. God permits in our lives many painful situations and circumstances that we may have an opportunity to prove His faithfulness, and so that the power of resurrection will come more and more into us.

For this very same purpose God made Abraham to wait till he had become old and his wife had passed the age for child-bearing. Unless God had put new life into those two bodies they could not have had a son. You can imagine the agony which they had to go through for twenty-five years after they left Haran. Abraham was a righteous man, but he had no son. (Gen.12:2; 15:2) He had waited for a son for a long time, and at last decided to make his will to the steward of his house. For many years he had been through agony and trials, and doubtless many mocked at him saying, "You said God would make of you a great nation! Why did He not give

you a son? If he had wanted to, He could have given you a son long ago". Thus people may have mocked and ridiculed, and God was silent till Abraham knew full well the power of resurrection (Rom.4 18-25). But that faith was given to him only after he had waited for 24 years Then he began to see that God had poured into him and his wife the power of resurrection though they had passed the age of child-bearing. Unless God had put new life into those bodies, that miracle would have not been possible. All the mockings of the past years had given Abraham faith. In the beginning he had *some* faith when God appeared to him. Straightway he had left his home and followed the Lord. But the Lord was not satisfied. He wanted the faith that would claim the power of resurrection.

Now we generally think of faith in terms of healing jobs, children, land, buildings, promotion and victory in battles But God is not satisfied with that. He wants the faith for the power of resurrection. It is only with the resurrection power that one can overcome all limitations, and trials and temptations. It is only with resurrection power we have an intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We may say He is our Saviour, and wonderful and all powerful God, but do we know Him intimately? When we know Him intimately we can speak to Him as friend to friend. It is only with those whom we know intimately, that we can share our thoughts without any reservation. We get more joy by sharing our thoughts and burdens and thus we become more intimate. Such an intimate knowledge of God comes by resurrection power. That is why Paul has no longing for visions, or dreams or signs; nor does he desire to be caught up to the third heaven. He is longing to

know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to Bethany in John 11 to let the family see for themselves how the power of resurrection might come into them; also He lets them see how that power through faith was able to raise Lazarus from death. We see how poor their faith was in John 11:21,22 and 27. Even though Martha had all the faith to say: "Yea, Lord I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world", yet when the test came she had no faith. When the Lord asked them to roll the stone away, she hindered Him. Our faith is mostly head faith. When Mary rose up hastily and came where Jesus was as in verse 32, she said: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died", as if healing depended upon His going to the house. With all their devotion and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, their faith was small With ourselves also, though we read the Bible every day, yet when the test comes we have no faith and no victory over temptation. We depend upon ourselves and for other needs we go to men for help. But when men fail us, then we call upon the Lord Jesus. That shows we have no living faith. Such was the condition of Martha and Mary. They respected Him and honoured Him and believed that He was the Living Christ, but they had no living faith. It is the same with us. Do we know how to receive the power of resurrection into our hearts and lives?

Further we see in John 11:41-44 and especially in verse 39, how Martha said, "By this time he stinketh for he hath been dead four days", when Jesus had said, "Roll away the stone". She showed by this that her old nature was lacking in faith We too begin to see many failures and shortcomings and how

corrupt our nature is. In the beginning when we hear sermons we see our hearts as deceitful and wicked and that we are great sinners. We say in prayer every day. "Lord, I am a terrible sinner", but we do not see our inward corruption. We depend upon our old nature for many things Even though we confess in prayer that we are terrible sinners, and say: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!" yet in all our activities we apply to the same old nature for victory and help. The Lord tells us that our old nature is very corrupt, stinking and defiled, and that we have to take the help of the new nature for everything (Rom. 6:5,6). We must believe that the Lord put our old nature on the cross when He died (Rom. 6 : 6). When Lazarus died, in order to show us that He had put our old nature on the cross, He raised him up again. We do not want to depend upon our old nature any more. For all our activities, plans and needs we want the new nature. When you begin to pray every morning by faith say: "Lord Jesus, You are my life, You are my strength and my wisdom. I am not depending upon my old nature for my strength or wisdom or for anything. Now Lord, give me more life and strength for the whole day. I am not depending on my will power for victory. I am so weak. Give me the power of Thy resurrection for all my needs".

Such a faith will not come easily till we have had many failures. After we have failed many times we will say: "O Lord, I confess I am no good". In the beginning we say, "Why pray so often?" If we pray for ten minutes in the morning it is more than enough, so we do not exercise our faith and we remain weak. Consciously or unconsciously we depend upon our own strength, our wisdom and our knowledge. Paul said, "I die daily" (1 Cor.15:31).

As human beings we all remain weak in spite of our Bible knowledge, cleverness and past blessings. With our old nature we think we can conquer temptation. The devil brings something into our path every day, by thought, word or deed, and the Lord puts into our life some disappointment, some painful situation, some trial or difficulty to teach us how to depend upon Him constantly. "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) For all things you can depend upon Him Generally we go to the Lord for big matters and not for small matters. That attitude brings us into many failures We have to recognize the power of resurrection for small matters too, for every burden, for every ministry, and for every need.

In the case of the resurrection of Jesus,Christ, He left behind His grave clothes. The stone was rolled away and the body came out of the grave. He Himself came out. But in the case of Lazarus (John 11: 44), he came out wrapped about with the grave clothes. This was for a purpose. If God wanted He could have brought him out without the grave clothes. But Jesus said: "Loose him and let him go". Others had to come to help him.

We too all need fellowship We cannot do without fellowship. Many believers remain weak spiritually because of lack of fellowship They happen to have had some experience with the Lord, but they do not want to have fellowship with the believers. They stay at home and read some books, and say: "Why go there and waste time". Hence they despise fellowship. For full growth we must have fellowship, just as Lazarus needed the help of other disciples to free him from the grave clothes.

We find prayer, worship, and testimony go together. When we pray alone we cannot pray for

every matter, even though we might pray the whole day. When we pray together we get liberty to pray for many matters, and we get great joy in doing so. It is even so with the Word of God. When we are at home, we cannot get much from the Word of God, but when we go for Bible Studies and meetings we get much more. Even with regard to service, when we come together we have liberty to give the Word. We all need the fellowship of believers and God's servants in order to enjoy more fully the power of the resurrection for all our needs, trials and temptations. Christ said to the disciples: "Loose him and let him go". Thus Lazarus became free New power came into him and automatically power came into Martha and Mary. So Martha, Mary and Lazarus became a happy family, and because of the change of heart. there was no strife in the family.

Once we receive the power of resurrection, we are in a better position to enjoy God's plan which is revealed in John 12

CHAPTER THREE

CHRIST THE HEAD

IN John 12 is the record of the third visit of the Lord Jesus Christ to Bethany. On that occasion Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with costly ointment of spikenard. The house was filled with its odour and that sweet perfume must have been smelled from a distance by the people passing by, it was so strong and sweet. That is how our Christian life should be, and also our Christian home life and our Church life. The sweetness of the Lord Jesus should be smelled and felt by all who pass by. The house speaks of peace and joy and victory, but before it was a house of sorrow, tears, unbelief, and of murmuring almost every day. Now it has become a house of joy, peace and happiness. Before we are born again, we are like a house of mourning, and our lives are full of defeat and failure and many problems, like Bethany was in chapter 11. In some houses the people are full of murmuring and complaints, and this house was once like that, but it is now full of peace and joy, and a house of fellowship, worship, and victory, because His power has come into the family

In John 11 we saw how they all experienced the power of resurrection collectively. Till that time Martha and Mary had respected the Lord Jesus and loved Him and honoured Him, but they did not have the power of resurrection which the Lord was ready to give them. Just as we see in Job 1:1, Job respected

and honoured God from the beginning. In Job 1:1 we are given a description of Job. God's Word says that he was a perfect man, an upright man, a man that feared God and eschewed evil and he had a perfect idea about God as we see later on in Job 42:5, 6. However, after going through sorrow, suffering and pain, he had a personal experience of the living God. It was the same with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They went through great and extreme sorrow (ch.11). They must have been ridiculed and mocked because, though they had often received the Lord Jesus in their home, and though they had sent for Him when their brother was sick, He did not turn up. So many of the Jews must have mocked and ridiculed them, saying: "See, you honoured Him, respected Him and welcomed Him in your home, and entertained Him, but now in your time of trouble He has not come!" So they had to face extreme difficulties and sorrow and shame, but with the same sorrow they experienced the power of resurrection; and in John 12 we find that the home is entirely different.

Imagine the Lord sitting on one side of the table and Lazarus on the other side and perhaps some other guests also. There, is Martha serving joyfully and Mary pouring the most costly ointment on the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. These five things speak of grace for a triumphant life, a happy home and a Living Church. Very lovingly and joyfully they have made the Lord Jesus Christ the Head of the family. Till that time He had been there as a guest only. Every time he came, they received Him as a guest, honoured Him, gave Him food and entertained Him. Then He was only a guest, but now they have found by experience that He is their Lord and Saviour and

Creator, and must be the Head of the home and of their lives, so they have given Him the charge of the whole. When they were in sorrow many came to comfort and console them, but they had no power to take away their sorrow. They could not take Lazarus out from the grave. But the Lord Jesus solved all their problems, wiped their tears, and turned their sorrow into joy; so willingly and joyfully they made Him the Head of the family.

We find on a wall-card in many homes. "Christ is the Head of this house, an unseen Guest at every meal and the silent Listener to every conversation." The Lord is only the "Head" on the wall, however, but in practice there is somebody else. It may be the wife and not the Lord Jesus. The husband only earns money, but the wife has control. Many important decisions are made by the wives! She can very easily change her husband's mind by screwing his ears!

The Lord Jesus is the head of a happy home. He must be the living Head in all our activities and plans, and whatever we do. Even individually, He must be our Head and we should go to Him and consult Him for everything.

In England the Queen has no power. Everything is settled by the Parliament and not by the Queen. The Parliament has to make the decisions, and when everything is decided, the Queen signs. She is only the "Head" by name, and has no power to change any of the country's laws. Many Christians regard the Lord as Head in the same way, but the Lordship of the Lord Jesus is not evident in their lives. It is only after many failures and defeat that they realize the importance of giving everything over to Him as the Head. I suffered for two years seeking to have that power in my life. I was reading the Bible the

whole day, spending many hours in prayer and Bible Study, attending meetings, and keeping myself free from worldly associations. But there was something lacking in my life till the Lord showed me the secret of living a victorious life.

One night the Lord met me and said to me: "Tell me, Bakht Singh, how were your sins forgiven?" I said, "Lord, I acknowledged that I was a great sinner, and I believed that You died for my sins, and have forgiven me for my sins". Then the Lord said to me, "Do you believe that you are the weakest person living and that you have no power over the flesh?" At once I got the secret; that for even the smallest thing I had to consult Him; and that I could depend upon Him for my wisdom, knowledge and strength for every detail, as a child holds the mother at every step because it cannot depend upon itself for anything. If the child sees a puppy, it starts to cry, and only the mother can help the child at that time. That is how we have to cast ourselves upon the Lord for everything (John 15:5). For the smallest thing we have to go to Him.

In school when I was a small boy, I had to ask the teacher for permission for every small thing, even to blow my nose. Even so spiritually, we have to ask the Lord about every small thing. We have to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the Head of our family life, individual life, and Church life. Before we make any plan for prayer, for Sunday ministry or personal work, we should go to the Lord and make our plans in His presence. In practice however, we go to Him about big things and not about the small things. For our ministry on Sunday we pray two or three times, but for Open Air meetings we do not pray at all. I have heard many say: "Why should we pray for

Open Air meetings?", but to speak at a Sunday meeting they think we need to pray often. That is how men treat lightly the things of God. However for everything we must go and consult Him, whether for family life, individual life or Church life, whether for a small or great ministry. Then we will know new life flowing into us, into the family and into the Church. Lazarus sitting at the table is the type of the power of resurrection which is available for us (Rom.6:5). But remember this: death and the power of resurrection go together.

When we are born again, we are planted or grafted into the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "planting" is important. Here it means "grafting". You may have seen small trees grafted, like grapes, plums, apples and mangoes. Then the trees which formerly yielded sour fruit begin to yield good, sweet and large fruit. A man will bring a slip from a good tree and graft it on the young tree. He makes a cut, attaches the slip, puts dung on it and wraps it with cloth. After a few years the whole tree changes its fruits, flowers and leaves. Everybody can see how the tree which yielded sour fruit is now yielding sweet fruit and the fruit which was small, is now large.

Paul uses the same words for grafting into the Lord Jesus. Not only has the Lord Jesus forgiven us our sins, but spiritually we are baptized into His death, burial and resurrection, and by the power of His death we are able to die to our old nature, just as a person having cancer must die, so death is the only remedy to cure cancer. Doctors find out the seat of the disease and after many tests they bring electric rays by some process and direct them on that place. Sometimes the process is very painful,

but the disease must gradually die by electric rays. There is no other remedy. In the same way, we have to bring by faith into us, the power of Christ's death, and die daily to our old sinful nature.

Many people believe in the death of the Lord Jesus, but they will not die to their old nature, because they fail to appropriate the power of resurrection to make them new. As we are planted into the death of the Lord Jesus (Rom.6:5), we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. It is very important that we claim by faith every moment and every day the power of resurrection for a triumphant and victorious life Every time we read the Bible, we must pray and begin to read, if there is service to do, we must pray and begin to work. We must receive the power of resurrection by faith for everything. The gift of God must be received every moment. It is an active and living faith as Paul says in Galatians 2:20 "the faith of the Son of God" not our faith. Paul testifies that Christ lives in him, "The life which I now live", he says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God". It should be an active and living faith. You must be conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ living in you, and then exercise faith for all your needs, responsibilities and trials. The same power can be received for our daily duties at school, hospital, office or anywhere else. In the same way, we receive the same power for times of temptation or hardship. It is a wonderful power that is available to us. The two things go together; first, we receive into us the power to die to ourselves, and secondly, the power of resurrection by faith for all our responsibilities, needs and trials.

The Lord Jesus represents the Head. Lazarus represents the power of resurrection. Thirdly, there was

food on the table, so lovingly prepared, and Lazarus was sitting at the table with the Lord Jesus, and they were speaking together as they were eating. That food speaks of the Word which God provides for daily strength—His living Word for every day. That food becomes very tasty and enjoyable by fellowship just as when you eat food together, the fellowship becomes very enjoyable. Whenever we eat by ourselves, we do not enjoy our food so much. Brothers and sisters should come together, first to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and then with one another.

Lazarus spoke to the Lord Jesus face to face at the table. He must have asked many questions and the Lord Jesus must have answered them. He was no longer shy, nor did he try to avoid the Lord Jesus. Now he is happy to see Him and to ask questions. We too should have the same love for the Lord Jesus, and the desire to talk to Him as friend to Friend. That is true fellowship (1 John 1 2) "Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son," then can we have fellowship among ourselves. Perhaps now you seek fellowship with the Lord Jesus by coming upon your knees to talk to Him about your problems, or questions or difficulties. But then will you wait till he talks to you? Sometimes we talk too much. There are some people who go on talking and talking and others have no chance to say anything. They have to try very hard to get a turn. That is how many people are spiritually. They go on talking and do not allow God to talk to them. Both must go together; first we must open our hearts to Him, telling Him our weakness, difficulties and needs, and then we should let Him speak and tell us why we are weak. He will tell us how to put things right, how to

be strengthened and how our need can be met, and His words will become so precious and real. The food on the table speaks of the Word of God which we enjoy through our fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Then there will be true growth, both personally and with the family.

In many preachers people cannot see the person of the Lord Jesus. The sermon may be good, but it does not have a lasting effect. Some preachers want to give the impression that they are good preachers, but they do not spend enough time in prayer to feel the presence of God. We find singing and praying are helpful before a meeting, because it is only as the people feel the presence of God, that they can enjoy the message. Food speaks of that enjoyment of God's Word

Fourthly, Martha was serving joyfully (Jn.12:2). The same Martha who in Luke 10:40 was full of jealousy and anger is now serving joyfully. Then she was "cumbered about much serving", which means she was quite tired of serving. She was serving, but not joyfully. At the same time she was jealous and angry because her sister had left her alone to serve. Now the same Martha was serving joyfully. For a triumphant life, a happy home and a living Church, joyful service is necessary. The more we serve others, the more joy we will receive. When our Lord came to Cana of Galilee, He was found among the servants (Jn.2:5). While others were found inside in the place of honour, the Lord Jesus was found among the servants. Some people are happy to be in the front chairs at a wedding party. As they do not get much in a prayer meeting, they like to sit in the last chair, but for a wedding they must be up in the front. The Lord Jesus was among the servants for a purpose.

That is why His mother said to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith, do!" On another occasion the Lord Jesus washed the feet of the disciples (Jn.13:5 and Matt 23.12). Here you find Martha serving joyfully. She has become humble now, because the power of resurrection has come into her. She is serving everybody with joy and thanksgiving. The more you serve, the more you grow spiritually. When you go to a place of worship, you have to go to find out what you can do in the house of God. Many persons go only for the sermon. They occupy some place every Sunday, some pillar or some corner. They come regularly and go away. At the same time, they will not lift a tumbler in their hand They walk this way and that way. They love to find fault. Other people will simply look around Yet we find that by doing something, whether it be sweeping the floor or spreading the mats, joyous service makes us grow spiritually. It must be true of individual or personal life, home life, or Church life. All this put together makes a happy home.

When I was young I had that longing. I said: "Lord, take me to a happy Christian home. I am not interested in radio, gramophones or furniture. I want a real Christian home, however poor it may be." He answered my prayer. I stayed in such a home for 18 months and I learned many things as I saw humility and service

Mary was full of devotion and worship (v.3) Before she had been so proud. She got easily hurt and wounded when the Lord delayed to come. Openly she was humble, and inwardly she was proud. So when the Lord Jesus came to Bethany she sat still Now her pride is broken. Now she is pouring ointment on His feet and wiping His feet with her hair

She is very thankful and grateful because the Lord Jesus has heard their cry, and has raised Lazarus from the grave and accomplished a change in the whole family. There is no more inward strife in Martha and Mary Before that they were quarrelling for nothing, but now there is the spirit of love and oneness. In the same way, Lazarus before may have had to be compelled to come for prayer, but now he himself comes for prayer. Mary pours the ointment out at the feet of our Lord to express her gratitude for what had happened to her and her family. They now all acknowledge Jesus as their Master, Lord, Creator and Resurrection; and say, "Thou art worthy of all worship! When you see Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, honour Him as such.

Now you will not find that devotion in many places. There is plenty of Bible knowledge and teaching in many countries, but very little devotion. People can sing and pray, but they cannot give the Lord true worship. In many places there are very few that worship Him. Many believers find it very hard to kneel in prayer. They sit and pray. They say He looks at the heart and not at our knees. Everywhere it is the same; men bow down before great people and honour them, but not the Lord Jesus. Both are necessary and Scriptural as in Philippians 2:10 and Romans 15:11; "Every knee shall bow to me"; Acts 20:36, Acts 21 5 All knelt down on the sea shore and prayed ; Psalm 95·6, 1 Kings 8:54; also Ezra 9:5 and in many other verses in the Bible we read that whether they were prophets or kings, all knelt down before the great God. There was no exception. The more we know our Lord as Lord of Life, the more we want to bow and exalt Him. Humble worship and devotion should be real in our

hearts, so both physically and spiritually we must bow down. We must be humble, devoted and full of the worship which leads to growth both in family and in the Church. If there is no real worship, there is no real growth. Many times we have good sermons, good Bible Study, and good singing, but there is not much devotion or real worship. That is why people remain barren.

There are five simple divine principles for a triumphant life, a happy home and a Living Church. Firstly we must go to Him for everything and get His approval for all our plans; secondly we must seek the daily appropriation of the power of resurrection for all our needs and problems and trials; thirdly, we must have fellowship, and be subject to the Word of God, fourthly, there must be joyful service; and fifthly true devotion and worship with humility and gratitude. This fivefold secret is for a happy home, and a happy home fulfils the divine order. May our Lord give us this experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

AT his fourth visit to Bethany the Lord planned to reveal His Kingship. He wanted His friends to understand this and how they could enjoy the privileges of that Kingship, and paradoxically how to be humble and meek. To fulfil the prophecy of Zachariah 9 9 the Lord Jesus came that fourth time to Bethany on the way to Jerusalem to show His Kingship, and now to be brought under that King ship through humility and meekness Many believers only accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. They want Him only to forgive their sins and eventually to take them to heaven there to enjoy themselves forever in some corner. They do not understand the real longing of the Lord Jesus to make them His co-workers and partners, and that, for that purpose they have to be brought under His Kingship and Lordship constantly. In many cases, after many years of defeat and failure, they understand and give the right place to the Lord Jesus in their hearts as heavenly King. He has to be King of our hearts, home and church, and His authority must be fully exercised in our midst constantly, individually, as a family, and as a Church. To this end, on the fourth visit to Bethany the secret is revealed to us showing how we can be kept under the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and how we can enjoy our partnership with Him as our heavenly King.

It was for a purpose that our Lord chose a colt of an ass and rode upon it to Jerusalem, even though He had the power and authority over all the beasts. In Mark 1.13, we find Him living among the wild beasts—lions, bears, jackals and wolves and whatever was in the deserts of Palestine, and they were obedient to Him. It says He was with them. If He wanted to ride on a lion, He could have called such an animal to Him, and it would have obeyed Him, as did the fishes and all the powers of nature and hell. In Luke 5, He wanted all the fishes to come into the net, so all the fishes, whether small, medium size or large came into the net without any holding back.

In passing we should say that in that miracle, the Lord was showing how Peter and the Apostles had to give the Gospel to all people. Just as at the Lord's command all kinds of fishes came into the net, those disciples had to become fishers of men, and not only of the poor people, but also of the middle class and the rich people. They had to fish for men whether white, black, rich or poor. Thus the Apostles were prepared to preach the Gospel throughout the world. In John 21, however, there is a different kind of message. Here He was teaching them how to build the Church (vs 15-18). He said "Feed my sheep" (v 17). The Apostles were commanded to bring the believers to maturity. Not only were they to be saved through their ministry, but they had to be fed and brought to maturity. Our Lord was illustrating this in John 21 by commanding only the great fishes to come into the net. He wanted big fishes. The disciples were being prepared and taught how to bring believers to full age and maturity (Eph.4.13).

When we become fully matured spiritually, then we can live in oneness and unity without strife and

jealousy. When we are babes spiritually, we go on quarrelling over small things, as were the people in Corinth who were quarrelling and backbiting. In John 21 our Lord was showing how the big fishes came into the net without quarrelling and strife, but were quietly together.

These illustrations also show our Lord's authority over all creation, and to return to our passage, though our Lord could have commanded any beast, even a lion to ride upon, He chose purposely a colt of an ass. Among all animals the colt of an ass is a very rebellious animal. The colt of an ass will not allow any body to ride on it and those who try to do so do not have an easy time. I have seen a colt being broken to make it suitable to ride upon. Two men will hold the colt, and a third man will start whipping it to make it go the way the men want it to go. They will train it like this until it stops kicking and obeys them. The Lord also uses certain methods to break us till we say, "Lord I won't kick any more" The Lord tamed the colt. What a mystery! There were other animals like a mule or a horse, yet He chose an unbroken colt. When they brought this unbroken colt to Him, straightaway He sat on it, and there was no kicking. It carried the Lord Jesus with great joy and obedience.

Many of us however, are unlike this colt and need to be beaten many times. That is our nature, we are so stubborn. We do not yield to the voice of God easily. We only want Him to bless us and deliver us from difficulties When it comes to doing His will we do not want that. We only want *our* will to be done That is why many believers do not grow spiritually They do not obey the Lord Jesus Christ implicitly. Yet with what joy and humility the colt

carried the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was showing His disciples at that time, if they wanted to be His true disciples, if they wanted to serve Him and follow Him, then they should be like that colt. By nature it was stubborn, but in God's presence it was perfectly humble and obedient. No man can break our will. All of us are very stubborn, and it is only after many years of beating that we become humble. We learn humility in so many ways. (c.f.Matt.11: 29). A yoke is used for two bullocks to labour together in pulling the cart or the plough. The Lord wants us to be His partners, like the two bullocks on the same yoke Like these bullocks we have to be humble. Read Ephesians 4·2-7; 1 Peter 5·5,6; Philippians 2 5,8 Here humility and meekness go together. There are different kinds of pride in all of us, and that is why we find it hard to obey the Lord implicitly. The Lord has to break our pride in many ways. Sometimes He rebukes us and thus breaks our pride. Sometimes He allows many failures to break us. Sometimes the breaking comes through sickness.

Acts 10:10-16 shows us some of the different ways by which God breaks our pride. Here was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, yet God had to break his pride before He could use him in the house of Cornelius. The Lord had to break his national pride. Peter never knew that he was as proud as this. He regarded himself as a devout and humble servant of God, but God saw in him his pride of nationality. For this reason the Lord held him up there to break his pride. (Acts 9:43) He went there for a short time to pray for one person. He could have gone back immediately but the Lord kept him there for a purpose. Unknown to him all his plans were broken. God did not allow him to go anywhere till he had

prepared him in His own way. In the same way He breaks our plans to bring down our pride and make us humble and meek. After a few days the Lord appeared to Peter. It is very clear that the Lord Himself spoke to him as he saw a sheet coming down filled with all four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air, and a Voice came saying, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter knew that the Lord was speaking to him and yet he says, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean. Peter says "Not so!", as though he knew better than God. Some people today also think such thoughts!

There is a true story about a pastor who gave long sermons. The people wrote a petition to him asking him not to preach for more than twenty minutes. He wrote down the message and gave it for twenty minutes, and then stopped, and began to pray. Whatever he had left out in the message he said in the prayer! He had been ordered not to preach for more than twenty minutes, and not to pray long, yet in that prayer he gave a long sermon. God is our Father and He knows all about us. Peter knew this, yet he said, "Not so Lord". This happened three times, and only goes to show how proud he was. Pride brings blindness and rebellion. God commanded the young colt to be brought to Him to ride on, and in God's presence it became very very humble. Now Peter, when the Lord asked him to kill and eat, should have said. "Surely Lord Thou wilt not make a mistake: whatever Thou commandest that will I obey". Unless our pride is broken we will not obey Him wholeheartedly.

Peter had a second rebuke in Galatians 2:11, where Paul rebuked Peter. There was still some hidden pride in Peter, so the Lord used Paul to break

his pride Different kinds of pride have to be broken in different ways. Paul himself was also in danger of spiritual pride. (2 Cor.12.7) We can be proud of our knowledge or ministry, our visions, dreams and other talents. All of us are exposed to these dangers, so God uses different ways to humble us, even as He used a thorn in the flesh to keep Paul humble. We don't know till today what that thorn was. It must have been something very painful and unbearable in many ways. God can use many means and ways in His sovereignty, to keep us humble when we are blessed. In the same way David became proud of his victory and had to be humbled (2 Sam.24. 1-4)

God has His own way of breaking all of us. David himself testified in 1 Samuel 17.47, and declared very boldly that he was not depending upon the sword or any other weapon. Yet, after winning many other battles in the strength of the Lord he wanted to take pride in numbering his people, to show to others that in his kingdom there were many mighty men of valour to fight the enemy He commanded Joab to number the people. Joab reminded him that he had not fought any battle in his own strength nor by the strength of his army, but that it was the Lord that had fought for him. Yet the king's word prevailed and Joab numbered the people, till God's wrath fell upon David, and he was brought to the threshing floor, (2 Sam.24:15,16) to break his pride. A threshing floor is the place where men separate the grain from the chaff. David had begun to take pride in his knowledge, schemes and plans, but God was telling him: "David, what you call cleverness is nothing but chaff " He had to be brought to the threshing floor to be humbled and emptied, and

to break and take away his strength and self-sufficiency. God does the same to us to make us depend upon Him completely. That very threshing floor later became the site for Solomon's temple (2 Chron.3:1).

For the same reason the Lord had to bring David to a threshing floor in 1 Chronicles 13:1-3. Rather than obey the Word of God, David used his worldly wisdom to bring up the ark of God (vs.7,9,10). It all became a failure because David took pride in his own arrangement to take a multitude to conduct the ark in procession. In Numbers 4 it is shown clearly how the ark should have been taken. The ark was not to be carried in a cart. It was to be carried on the shoulder of the Levites. David ignored this detail completely. He wanted to show off his army with its captains and leaders, and it all ended in failure. Many people take pride similarly in the work of God. They are ignorant of God's Word, and think it is old-fashioned. Instead they take pride in their degrees and their philosophy and to impress the crowds, they use worldly means and build buildings. For Gospel preaching how often they depend upon cameras and other means. They do not use God's Word as they should. In preaching they use references to back up what they say, but men can never go against God's Word God uses different methods to break our pride in culture, in nationality and education. It is only through humility and full obedience that we can build the house of God: only through acknowledging the headship and kingship of God. To show this, the Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, as a humble person and not in all His glory. We find this colt of an ass walking on garments and honour given to it. If it

had not obeyed but had started kicking then it would not have had the privilege of walking grandly on the garments How that colt was honoured!

We have the same honour when we uphold the Lord Jesus in the right way. We in ourselves have no honour as God's servants, but when we obey the Lord fully, wherever we go we are showered with love and kindness in so many ways. If, however, we start kicking like an ordinary colt we also will be beaten.

The Lord Jesus is our heavenly King and we have to be brought under His heavenly subjection. Many of us preach Him as a prophet and as a miracle worker, but we do not preach Him as the heavenly King and the King of our hearts This requires much meekness and gentleness, obedience and emptying. This fourth entry of our Lord Jesus into Jerusalem from Bethany was on a colt and showed that He was entering as a king. First of all we have to enthrone Him as King in our hearts, then in the family and lastly in the Church. Then only can we go with boldness and authority to preach the Gospel because we have the heavenly King enthroned within us.

Only when we give the Gospel with full authority and purity and in all humility can there be any results In this fourth visit we find this great secret given to us. We see in Mark 11:8 what great joy was brought into the whole town. That joy began from Bethany and continued into Jerusalem. Bethany was a small village when compared with Jerusalem which was full of many people, including scribes and Pharisees and rich people. But they were totally blind spiritually. Though Bethany was a small village joy came from that place.

It is with a small remnant that the Lord will accomplish His purposes these days. Though we are few in number God can do great things through us if we keep humble and obedient. There should be wholehearted and implicit obedience without questioning. Do what He commands you to do. We find that when certain of them nearby asked the disciples what they were doing (Mark 11.5) loosing the colt, they replied that Jesus wanted it, so they let it go. So whatever the Lord demands of you give it quickly and willingly and joyfully and you will find the secret of His power for a triumphant life, a happy home and a living Church.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST

IN Mark 11:11 we have the account of the fifth visit of the Lord Jesus to Bethany. After His resurrection, in the course of forty days the Lord Jesus appeared ten times to His disciples, that is, five times on Easter day and five times between the second day of His resurrection and the day of Ascension. In those ten appearances lies the tenfold secret of the power of His resurrection, but that is another study. In these chapters we see our Lord coming to Bethany on eight occasions, and step by step unfolding to them how as believers they can enjoy a triumphant life; a happy home and a living Church.

After He had seen the condition of the temple, our Lord came back to Bethany (v.11). That day He had seen what was happening in Jerusalem in the temple and among God's servants and others. Before He could pour out His wrath upon them He turned back to Bethany to share His burden with those there. As in Genesis 18:17-22 God appeared to Abraham before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, "How can I hide this great secret from my servant Abraham, because he is My friend", so in the same way the Lord went to Bethany to share His burden with His friends there At Jerusalem He had seen with His own eyes what was happening in the temple (Mark 11:17). He had openly said that it had become a den of thieves Such was the condition of the city. There had been a prophecy

made concerning Jerusalem in Mark 11:7-11. You can imagine the Lord Jesus returning to Bethany and gathering His friends and disciples around Him, and telling them what He had seen, and what was happening, according to the prophecy. He was sharing with them what He had seen and what He was going to do.

As we begin to grow spiritually, we begin to know what it means to have partnership with the Lord. We have to attain to some measure of maturity in order to bear the burdens of one another. As was the condition of the people in the day of Malachi 1:6-7, so it was then and as the Lord Jesus went about with His disciples He could see the priests offering polluted sacrifices (v 8). In Leviticus 1:3, the people were told clearly what kind of animal had to be offered as a sacrifice for a burnt offering, a trespass or a sin offering and every animal which was presented to be offered as a sacrifice, whether goat, lamb or ox had to be thoroughly examined and then sacrificed, because they were a shadow of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was found without sin, for He had no sin. He was perfectly blameless in thought, word and deed. To foreshow His moral perfection the people had to offer an animal without blemish, and the priest was supposed to examine the animal before it was sacrificed. Otherwise there was no value in the sacrifice. God was foreshowing how for their own salvation somebody had to be offered on their behalf without blemish.

Now when the Lord Jesus came into the temple, He saw these people selling animals, and the priests receiving the sacrifices. He saw lame, sick and blind animals being sold and received by the priests. Now

unless the priests had been bribed, they would not have received such animals from the people. Even today we see such corruptions going on everywhere. The priests were bribed by the merchants who bought the animals. They all worked together in business and offered to the Lord sickly and blemished animals as sacrifices, and such were accepted by the priest. The Lord Jesus saw these things Himself with His disciples that day.

Now the Levites were not supposed to take anything from the people They were supposed to live on the tithes and offerings given in the temple. They were not satisfied with this and so were receiving bribes from the people who sold animals and other things (Mal 1:13,14). Though they had good animals of their own, they did not give them in sacrifice, which goes to show that wickedness and corruption were going on everywhere In Malachi 2:4-8, the Levites were supposed to have the great responsibility of teaching the Word of God, in order to keep the people in the right path, but they were far more busy scheming how to get more money. Rather than being God's messengers they became the Devil's messengers and robbed God as we read in Malachi 3:8-9. All the things the Lord Jesus saw in the temple and among His people in Jerusalem as described in Matthew 23:13, 15-23, He told to His friends at Bethany. He was in the temple the whole day, and saw all that was done inside and outside the temple. I can imagine the Lord Jesus Christ with a very sad, heavy and burdened heart returning from Jerusalem to Bethany that night, and before He scourged the temple, He told them that secret. As we become co-workers with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord reveals many secrets which He has hidden

from others (Matt.13:17; Deut.29:29. So before our Lord drove out the people from the temple, He shared His burden with His friends in Bethany, and told them what He was going to do, just as God shared the burden with Abraham about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In this way God's people can enjoy partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are growing spiritually, many things will be revealed to us before they happen. The Lord has warned us through His prophets of coming events like earthquakes, famine etc., and again and again before anything happens, the Lord gives us the privilege to prepare His people for the coming judgment. Thus we enter into the hidden secrets of God's heart The fifth purpose of the Lord Jesus in visiting Bethany was to share His secret and burden with those who had become His co-workers.

In Mark 11:12-14,20 we read of another happening in Bethany. Near Bethany our Lord saw fig leaves. As the Creator, He could have made that tree yield fruit even though it was not the season for fruit. In our sinful nature none of us have any power to bring forth any fruit. It is only as we receive the Word of God that we can yield fruit. In the Bible the Jewish nation is compared to the fig tree, but because of their rebellion, they remained barren. They had the privilege to have prophets of God and the Word of God, and He sent not only one, but many prophets, and with power and authority they gave the message to that particular nation. God spoke through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and many others, but they killed their prophets. They could not receive their message, because they had no desire to obey it, and without obedience they

were barren. God's time had come when they were to be judged as a nation. As an evidence against them the next morning the fig tree had become dry. The Lord Jesus was prophesying again that as a nation they had rejected Him completely. For three years the Lord had been coming to them again and again, but they would not accept Him nor believe in Him, so as a nation, they were cast out, and as a nation they became dry. Those who have living faith can become fruitful, which is the reason for the reference to faith in Mark 11 23. Our Lord was seeking to show that it is only through a strong living faith that our lives can be triumphant, our home a happy home, and our church a living Church. There is no lack of knowledge today, but a great lack of faith. Because faith is lacking God's people have become barren. When they want money, they start begging. They talk much about God's faith and might, but when they want money they beg, borrow or scheme. They fail to exercise faith for victory or for their need. If we want to be God's real co workers we must trust Him wholly and solely, and exercise strong faith regarding all our burdens and activities.

Now we read of the next or sixth visit of the Lord Jesus to Bethany in Mark 11 19. Having cast out the people from the temple vs 15-17, our Lord is returning from the city (v 19). It had been a very hard task for the Lord Jesus Christ. He had shown love and compassion to all the people, but because they did not accept it, they had to be judged. He had thrown down the tables and had turned the people out with a scourge. He was feeling very sad, and turned back to Bethany where He found real rest and satisfaction. In Jerusalem there had been nothing but sorrow, grief and pain, but in Bethany

He knew that there was a small group who would give Him real rest and satisfaction

Sometimes we feel very tired and worn out and lonely, and because we know that sorrow and pain and burdens cannot be shared with other people or neighbours, we want to go home that we may share with our parents, wife or family. With the same longing the Lord Jesus Christ went to Bethany. He never regarded Jerusalem as His home, but Bethany, where He could share His burden and sorrow, a place where He could be comforted and strengthened. What a mystery! The Lord Jesus our Creator was seeking comfort from His people. He was showing how He also was longing to be comforted, even as we want to be comforted. When He went to Bethany He must have slept soundly. If He had slept in Jerusalem He would have been restless and tossing about in His bed the whole night, but in Bethany He had no sorrow because of the warm welcome given to Him by those few who loved Him. In Bethany He found real rest and peace and comfort, and those who were longing to listen to Him.

At the beginning of our Christian life we want to go to Him for our wants like Hannah. In the beginning she prayed "Lord, give me a child" She never realized the Lord's need (1 Sam. 1:11) In the beginning she only thought of her own need and said "Lord, take my reproach and my barrenness, and give me a child. Make me happy" Later she found out that the Lord had some need Then her prayer was changed: "Lord, if you give me a child, He will be lent to Thee", or, in other words, "Please Lord, give me the privilege of meeting your need" The Lord heard her prayer and gave her a son who met her need and the need of His people. In the begin-

ning we also pray for ourselves and find our burden centred in the family We pray for our own particular need. We say, "Lord touch *me* Look after *me* and supply all *my need*," but later on we find out what God's need is. Then we begin to say, "I am not concerned about *my* need. O Lord, which way can I satisfy *Thy* heart? Is there any special thing Lord that I can do to please Thee and satisfy *Thee* and give Thee comfort and rest?"

Many children go to their father only when they want sweets and other things, but they never say: "Father, can I do anything to help you? You are looking so tired and sad. Can I do anything to lessen your burden?" There are very few of that type. Yet there are some children who look at their father's or mother's face and say: "You take rest. I will do all the work " That is the right attitude!

Do you say, "Now Lord, tell me in which way I can please Thee and satisfy Thee and give Thee comfort and rest?" He will answer those who ask. He will tell us what He requires, as He did to those at Bethany who ministered to Him satisfaction, comfort, rest and peace. If we want to grow spiritually our daily attitude should be. "Lord, I am not concerned about my own problems or needs of any kind. Please tell me: Do You want me to go anywhere, or to meet anybody, or help anybody? Is there anything I can do for You which will be in accordance with Your perfect will, which will give You more joy and happiness and peace?" Then He will tell you where to go and what to do. It is a wonderful thing to obey God, and the way He helps us to obey His will is also wonderful. Then it happens automatically and unasked that the Lord helps us and supplies our every need.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

WHEN we have spiritual health, we enjoy God's favour and grace in abundance. Bethany means health, joy, peace and blessing. The Lord wants us all to live in Bethany, our home to be a Bethany and our Church to be a Bethany. I have seen in many countries that 'Bethany' is a name given to many homes and hospitals. It was a place of spiritual importance in God's plan and that was why the Lord Jesus went again and again to Bethany. In fact as we have already seen, our Lord never stayed a single night at Jerusalem though He went there several times.

When the Lord first went to Bethany, He went to reveal to His friends there their true condition, (Luke 10:40-42). In John 11, He came to let them have an experience of the power of resurrection. In John 12, He gave them a fivefold secret of the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ, joyful service, devotion, fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the power of resurrection revealed by the raising of Lazarus, and the heavenly food Cheerful service is revealed by Martha, and loving devotion and service is revealed by Mary.

Then in Mark, we have the record of three visits. First of all He went to Jerusalem riding upon the colt of an ass to show the real meaning of humility and obedience, the second time, how to accept the Lord's will in every matter however small; and the

third, to teach that true spiritual partnership by which the need of both are satisfied; how, after seeing things happening in Jerusalem, He could turn to Bethany and share the burden of His heart with His friends there; and after casting out the people from the temple, He could come back to be comforted and to find rest.

For the seventh visit, let us turn to Matthew 26 and Mark 14:1 to 9. In Matthew 26:2 it says "two days" after the passover, and the ointment was poured on His head. In John 12:1 we read that the ointment was poured on His feet "six days" after the passover. This proves that the visits were on two different occasions. In Matthew 26:2, our Lord said again to His disciples that the time had come for Him to suffer, to be reviled, to be killed and to rise again. Even though He said this a number of times, yet His disciples could not understand or believe what He was saying. Somehow they had become deaf spiritually in this matter, (c.f.Mark 8 31). Because he could not understand these words, Peter began to rebuke the Lord Jesus Christ, (v 32). In Mark 9:31, rather than understand the meaning of His words they began to argue among themselves in verse 33: They did not understand what He was saying, yet in trying to understand, they began to argue who would be chief among them, or the next leader. When the Chief Minister died the people of Madras asked: "Who will be the next leader?" That is man's chief concern. The disciples thought: "He is going to die and who will take His place?" I think Peter, James and John were more concerned about their own personal honour than the actual message of the Lord Jesus. That seems to be many people's failure. Though they serve God in many ways, they

want also to be honoured, magnified and glorified. So many preachers have amongst their many aims that their names must come foremost in posters and other things. Rather than magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in their teaching and preaching, they magnify man. How quickly these disciples had forgotten everything He had taught them. They were quarrelling as to whether Peter, James or John would take first place.

In Mark 10:33 to 35 their greatest desire at that time was to occupy the highest posts. First of all they were arguing among themselves. Then two of them formed a separate party. They thought they would only have to go privately to the Lord Jesus Christ and get special recommendation, and they would be sure to get the coveted position, seated one on the right hand the one on the left of the Lord. All their hidden desires were being revealed. Rather than ask the Lord "Please tell us why are You going to suffer like this", they were concerned as to what was going to happen to *them*, and how *they* could get something from Him before He went away. In a wealthy family when the father is going to pass away, brothers and sisters often start quarrelling as to who will get the house or the land, or other property. To get the property, they try to get the father's signature. Here it was the same! Rather than find out the purpose of the Lord's suffering and death and rising again, they were only concerned as to how *they* could be great. They forgot what our Lord had told them earlier,(Matt.23:8-12) They were told that if they wanted to be exalted they should be humble. There was no need to quarrel and they were not to adopt worldly ways to obtain honour. They were told in a plain way that if

they humbled themselves they would be exalted and would occupy a high position.

How foolish we are to adopt worldly ways to be exalted when God's Word is so clear. It is by true humility that we can be exalted by Him. Nobody understood what our Lord was saying, because their mind was upon themselves. One man once asked another to add "two plus three", and give the result. The other man answered: "Five loaves". Rather than say the result would be five only, he said "five loaves of bread". His first thoughts were on his tummy. The disciples were like that. They were thinking of themselves; of their own honour and position, so, even though the Lord Jesus spoke simply and clearly, they could not understand.

In contrast the women *believed* what the Lord said While all those disciples could not understand what our Lord was saying so clearly, Mary understood! (Matt.26:2,12) Our Lord testified of her that she did not come to Him for any favour. It is quite obvious that she had no sickness. She had not come to put right any problem. She just came to prepare Him for His burial, (John 12:7). Mary anointed Him because she was grateful for what the Lord Jesus had done in raising Lazarus to life. Her heart was full of gratitude as she anointed His feet, (Matt.26:2,12) and she had no personal motive. She believed what the Lord had told them. These words had been spoken by the Lord so many times to His disciples and also to many others, but they did not believe, yet she believed, so she came to anoint Him. Somehow her eyes had been opened, and she began to understand that He was giving His life willingly for the whole world (John 10:11,14, 17,18).

How clearly the Lord had told His disciples that He was going to lay down His life willingly for His sheep. He did not want their tears nor sympathy. He said: "Don't worry about My suffering. No man has power over Me. I am going to give my life willingly, so that the sheep may come into My fold." Not a single man believed His words, only this simple woman believed that He was going to die as the Lamb of God. Perhaps she thought I know now why John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

For the Lord Jesus now told them that two days would be the Passover (v 2) and on that day of the Passover, He was going to die on their behalf as the Lamb of God. Believing that, this woman brought an alabaster box of very precious ointment (Matt. 26:7). I do not really know the price. It may have been 300 pence (Mark 14 5). That may have been the estimate of the price of the ointment. But according to Matthew's Gospel, it was very precious ointment. Its price could not be estimated easily by any in the crowd, it was so precious. The woman may have sold all that she had, to buy the ointment. Generally such ointment is only used by rich people on special occasions, as marriages, and then only for the bride and the bridegroom. Only a rich family can use such ointment, not the poor. The woman must have spent all that she had to buy that box of ointment, and endured much suffering and sacrifice and hardship. Then she brought it to the Lord Jesus and broke the box and poured the ointment upon Him. (Mark 14 3). Generally the box was so made that it had a tiny hole to pour out the ointment, because it had to be kept for a long time and the owners did not want to waste it on just anybody. It

could thus be kept for many years. Besides this, it had such a strong sweet odour that only a drop was necessary. But this woman wanted to pour out all the ointment upon the Lord. She did not want to hold back even one drop for herself or others. Some might have remained at the side of the box, but she wanted every single drop to be poured upon Him, so we read in Mark 14 that she "brake the box". Nothing could now remain. She poured it all upon His head that His whole body might be anointed.

When the High Priest was set apart, a large quantity of the oil was poured upon his head and it ran down upon the head to the beard, and down to his feet (Psalm 133) Thus the ointment was shared by the whole body. If we keep ourselves under the headship of the Lord Jesus, we as His body, the Church, get part of the ointment that is poured on His head. This woman wanted to anoint Him and recognize Him as the King of Kings. Such ointment was used only for the High Priest, bridegrooms, and kings Even now when the King of England is set apart, they anoint him This woman came to the Lord knowing that He is the everlasting High Priest, the heavenly Bridegroom and the King of Kings. What faith! The others heard Him but could not understand Him. Rather they rebuked Him and tried to stop Him in what He was doing, or they were disputing as to who would be the greatest and how to get the highest position in the kingdom. But this woman only wanted to exalt the Lord Jesus. She could not do anything else, so she came to anoint Him, saying in that act "Now Lord, I believe You are dying for the whole world You have said so You are giving Your life for the sheep and dying as the Lamb of God You are my creator, King and Saviour!"

If you want a triumphant life, a happy home and a living Church, the Lord Jesus must be exalted in our prayer and testimony and lives. Some may say that they are filled with the Holy Spirit, but if you watch their conversation or their preaching, they exalt themselves rather than the Lord Jesus. You find that whatever they say or do is for their self glory and edification.

On this point the Holy Spirit is warning us in Acts 5.30-32. Peter was exalting the Lord Jesus, when He declared how the Lord Jesus was exalted. "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is given to us to let us see the exalted position of the Lord Jesus. For example, when the Queen of England was to be crowned, they called all the heads of the people of different countries. All cannot go there, only the heads of the states of the country are invited. If there is no king, the prime minister will go. So many kings and prime ministers were witnesses of the crowning of the queen, and when they returned to their own kingdom, they declared what they had seen and how the queen was crowned. The Holy Spirit was the first witness in heaven of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, (Eph.1:19,20,22,23). He was a witness of that exaltation on the day of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. Then He came down to tell others what had happened at that time. So Peter says, "Are we not witnesses of that exaltation?" Do we exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in our testimony, conversation, prayer, teaching or service of any kind? We have a share in His fulness.

In this case this woman did not come for any favour or any earthly need. She is not shedding tears because He is going to die. Others were arguing

as to why He should suffer and die. Others may have shed tears when they heard that He was going to die But *she* did not shed tears for she knew that He was willing to suffer and die in our stead as our Saviour and as our King of Kings. She wanted to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus as a king would be anointed, so she brought the most precious ointment to Him saying by faith. "Lord, I am prepared to pour out all for Thee. Now You demand anything from me, and I am prepared to give it to you". That is true worship

First we must exalt the Lord Jesus in our testimony. Then say to Him, "You demand anything You wish from me". There are many persons who worship so beautifully for fifteen minutes on Sundays calling the Lord Jesus "so precious, the Chiefest among ten thousand, the rose of Sharon, and the Altogether Lovely One" yet at the offering with great difficulty they offer only two rupees or one rupee That is their worship. You have to say to Him, "Lord, whatever you ask of me, I will give". Rather than arguing in your mind whether to give Rs. 2 - or Rs 3 - or Rs 4/- or Rs 5/ give what He demands. Do not say to Him: "Lord, what will my wife say if I give Rs 10/ She won't like it if I do not ask her" But say: "Lord, what do You want? My body, my money or anything that belongs to me I will give to Thee, because Thou hast given all for me. Lord, demand what You like Whatever You want is Yours and I give it joyfully". With that thought this woman came to the Lord "Lord, Thou art worthy, so I have brought the most precious ointment" Just as she broke the box, and poured out every drop of it, so we have to be broken com-

pletely, and poured out. True worship comes when we are truly broken and humbled.

As we saw before, many of us are like the colt of an ass and require to be broken in many ways. What a joy it would be for us to say then "Lord, I am Thine". How much more we get then than we have to give Him.

Let us look at a different portion of God's Word, 1 Kings 10:2-9. What riches the Queen of Sheba brought to the king, not that the king was poor. Nor was it like the Nizam demanding gold. In the olden days, if anyone wanted to see the Nizam, they had to bring a piece of gold, otherwise they could not see him. But this queen brought everything willingly, camels, precious stones, gold and other precious things, (v.10). She brought all these things to honour Solomon, and look at what she received in exchange (v.13). Solomon said to her: "You ask what you want", and gave all her desire and whatever she longed for or asked for, beside that which Solomon gave of his own bounty. So she received much more than she gave. So it is with us. We will receive much more than we give the Lord. We learn that lesson after many years of barrenness. If we give our Lord one tenth, we feel proud. Of course many believers do not give even that. Give God much more than that, then you will see how much more you will receive.

This was the seventh visit of the Lord Jesus to Bethany and we have been made to see how the Lord Jesus is exalted and magnified as One who is far more precious than anything else, (1 Pet.2:7). When the woman brought the ointment to the Lord Jesus she was saying in effect: "Lord, to me you

are more precious than the whole world can be. You are going to give your whole life and blood for me that I may live for ever. You are indeed very precious and worthy to be worshipped". (Rev.5:12). But though she had no words to express her heart's worship, she did so with the ointment. When we too believe the words of the Lord Jesus, the light of God begins to shine in us, and we will begin to see that He is our Creator, King of Kings and Lord of Lords and worthy of true worship and we will say, "I will give all I have." We will be willing to pour out on Him all that is precious to us, and willing to be at His feet. Then we will be exalted by Him; and the more we exalt Him the more we will be exalted.

"Worthy is the Lamb to receive all power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

THE eighth visit of the Lord Jesus to Bethany is recorded in Luke 24:50. The Lord ascended into heaven from Bethany, (v.51). In Acts 1 we are given details of what happened before the Lord ascended, (v.4). He commanded his disciples that they had to wait first for God's time, to be "endued with the power from high". If they wanted to be His disciples, they had to obey Him, love Him and follow Him. They had to wait for His time. Often we go ahead or behind God's time, but we should always wait for God's command and God's time.

The people of God in the wilderness (Ex.13: 20-22) had to wait for God's guidance. Sometimes the cloud stayed one year or one week or one month, and sometimes the cloud lifted up in the morning, or in the evening, or at midday. They were not to move till it was lifted up, and when the cloud was lifted up, they were to march. The Lord said to them: "Now don't make any plan! Don't worry about the blueprint. Don't go away. First wait till I tell you what to do." The great secret is to wait for God's time, in business or in spiritual activities. Thus will we find liberty in God's service.

Secondly, we must be governed by the Holy Spirit completely (Acts 1:5), and led only by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:14). If you ask some people: "How do you find God's will?" "How can you prove that it is God's will?" There will be no answer. "God

spoke to me! God spoke to me!" they may say, but they cannot prove it. If God has spoken to us of any problem, or any matter, we must be able to prove it by His Word as to how and when He spoke. Only then will there be His blessing.

Thirdly, Acts 1:7. The disciples were not to dictate to God or interfere with His plans. We must get God to take charge of the whole situation. He is sovereign. He won't allow anybody to interfere with His plans. As we obey Him, we come into His plan. Life is like a mountain road, not a trunk road. On a trunk road, we can see long distances. On the mountain road, we can see only short distances. When we come to a turning we see a small part of the road ahead. That is how He will show us the way He wants us to go. He will not show us too many things at first. When God told Samuel to go and find the man after His own heart, He could have said, "You go and find David", but He did not speak in that way. Samuel had to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse. It was only after Jesse had brought *all* his sons, that Samuel found God's choice. If we make too many plans, we miss God's best. With God we can only go step by step (Acts 1:8). We have to witness to all classes and communities, and serve by prayer, love and sacrifice. The disciples became witnesses of His ascension (v.10). While they were gazing up into heaven, two men came and said to them: "Why are you standing gazing up into heaven? Go back and tell people what you have heard. You tell them how you have **seen** the Lord go into heaven and also how He shall **come** again in like manner as you have seen Him go **into heaven**". That is the last **message**: "**In the same manner** He will come again".

His last visit to Bethany was to prepare His disciples for His second coming. First I believe in the heart that the Lord Jesus Christ has saved me by His grace, has come into my heart and lives in me, and the very same Lord is coming back for me. I may be prepared for His coming and to be with Him, but to be ready for that coming, I have to prepare my neighbours, relations, and friends also. The big task of the church is to prepare people for the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

There are 365 references about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels and epistles, and 28 chapters on it. It is a very important matter, so Lord's Day by Lord's Day we gather that we may be prepared for His second coming. We do not gather primarily to hear the message or to sing songs, (1 Cor. 11 : 26) but to remember His death *till* He *comes*. The Lord's Day worship is very important, for as we prepare, our hearts are cleansed, things are put right, and we are ready for His second coming. Thus our heart, home, and Church can become a Bethany prepared and waiting for Him.